



# Saint Louis Audubon Bulletin

December, 1964

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## NORTHWEST TO ALASKA DECEMBER 15, 1964

Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington — 8:15 P. M.

Alaska is a land of spectacular scenery, hardy people, and equally hardy plants and animals. Photographer-naturalist Walter Berlet of Casper, Wyoming, spent months in this northern territory filming its life and legends in breathtaking color.

The film opens with expansive aerial views of the world famous Alaskan glaciers as we fly to the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea. On these islands enormous herds of fur seals have congregated to mate and raise their young. In the summer months, eighty per cent of the world's fur seals gather here—the males arriving first to stake out their territories, and await their harems.

Moving northeastward, we go into Nome where at midnight there is still enough light to photograph; then on to Dawson City—the “Gold Rush City” in the Yukon Territory. Our adventure includes a trip down the Yukon River in a rubber raft, stopping along the way to explore the precipitous habitat of the mountain goat and dall sheep, the smallest of the bighorn sheep.

Alaska's wetlands make it the greatest breeding ground in North America. Gulls, grebes, ducks, geese, and other water birds nest in abundance.

Our journey continues in a specially equipped light plane to the base of Mt. McKinley, the highest mountain in North America, where a beautiful but deadly avalanche suddenly fills the screen with billowing clouds of snow.

Many different birds, including the Lapland longspur, horned lark, long-tailed jaeger, mew gull, the Alaskan golden plover, all three varieties of ptarmigan, and some squabbling snipes are filmed in close-up sequences characteristic of Walter Berlet's skill and talent. Porcupines, moose, wolves, menacing grizzlies, and the wily wolverine are but a few of the mammal representatives.

The climax of *Northwest to Alaska* is an unforgettable migration of thousands of caribou. Continually growing in size and volume, the herd trots and gallops, day and night, over land and through rivers, seldom stopping for rest, in a spectacular display of a great wild freedom, symbolic of a great wild land.

Walt Berlet served for four and a half years as a Tank Officer with the 1st and 2nd Armored Division, U. S. Army, in Europe and Africa. Upon

completing his tour of duty, he became established in retail business in Casper, and owned and operated three prosperous retail stores in the Rocky Mountain area. In time he felt the need for a greater challenge, and began to devote more and more time to conservation education. Convinced that motion pictures and television offer one of the best means for teaching, he has recently abandoned his retail operations to spend his full time producing films for television and lectures.

Walter Berlet's work with the Boy Scouts and many conservation organizations has given him a good knowledge of the problems facing our wild heritage. His writings and zealous efforts supporting our wilderness areas have received national support. For the last three years he has narrated and produced a weekly television show, and has recently completed a wildlife film for the E. I. DuPont de Nemours Co. entitled "Wildlife of the 49th State."

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thursday evening, December 3rd there will be a showing of approximately 400 slides selected out of 1600 from all over the world. This meeting is sponsored by the St. Louis Camera Club. The subject will be "Nature Section of Missouri Valley Exhibition of Photography" at the St. Louis County Library, 1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd. at 8 p. m.

We urge all who can attend to do so as we feel this will be a very outstanding lecture. A great portion of these slides will pertain to birds and nature in general.

The Alton Christmas bird count will be held on Sunday, December 27. All those interested contact Mr. Kemp Hutchinson at Alton 3-9185 as to the meeting place and time.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank Lanier and Cecil Criger for their splendid cooperation in supplying the public address system which we are using for the lectures at the Third Baptist Church with such splendid results.

## A BIRD TRIP TO ICELAND

By E. G. CHERBONNIER

Where is it? About 250 miles east of Greenland with its northern tip almost on the Arctic Circle, and the southern part, 200 miles away, warmed by the Gulf Stream.

It's amazing to see the capital, Reykjavik, supply its entire hot water needs, winter and summer, from a hot spring ten miles away. Sixteen to twenty thousand homes have good hot water heating in winter, and you get it piping hot out of the faucet at all times.

There are no railroads and you don't see a sign of smoke in the whole city. It is the cleanest place you can imagine. White outside walls stay white year after year.

Interior roads are relatively new, entirely unpaved, and full of lava dust in dry weather. It is a relatively new country geologically, and there are many great lava beds that seem to have been poured out just yesterday.

Glaciers are common, and one in the eastern country is said to be the largest in Europe. Incidentally, the Icelanders think of themselves as Europeans, as their ancestors came from Scandinavian countries and a few from Ireland.

At my age maybe I shouldn't mention it, but the women are very pretty;

and it is rumored that the American soldiers and sailors stationed at the NATO base there are fully aware of it.

For many years Iceland was governed by Norway and then by Denmark. When Hitler moved into Denmark, the British moved into Iceland to protect their shipping routes; and then we built a big air base near the capital. As Iceland is now independent, recently some of the "pinkos" objected; and it is now a NATO base, but with quite a few Americans there.

The government is socialistic, with pensions and free medical care for everyone. I don't see how a country of only 180,000 and with practically no mineral resources, can afford to keep embassies in the major countries, as well as operate a government shipping line and continue its road and agricultural improvement.

The big crop is fish. The boats go out in summer and winter, even though they have only about five hours of daylight in midwinter; and everywhere near the coast you see enormous racks with thousands of dried fish hanging on them. Much of this fish goes to Russia, which means in turn that they must buy some Russian oil. However, I saw many Shell stations. If you enjoy caviar, I won't tell you what it looks like when you see tubs of it being taken out of the fish.

The next crop is sheep, and their flocks number nearly a million. In the summer, they graze on the high mountains while the broad valleys in between grow grass which is cut for hay for winter feeding.

In the valleys the water table is very near the surface; and they dig deep ditches to drain it off. Recently this is being done by machinery, and it will undoubtedly increase the carrying capacity of the pastures. In the fall the sheep are herded down from the mountains with men on their splendid small horses, with the help of dogs; and each district has pens into which the sheep are driven and then separated by ear marks into individual flocks to be fed during the winter.

An interesting sight was the taking of eider duck down from the nests. You can walk right up to eider ducks when they are nesting, and about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an ounce of down is taken, half during the middle of the nesting and the rest when the nests are empty. This down brings a very high price.

Dairying is practiced mainly near the capital or some of the major towns, although we did see some milk cans on platforms in the far-out country. Dairy cattle seem to me to be mainly of Guernsey origin, with a few black and white, but the Icelanders insist that these are not Guernsey but Iceland cattle. As their grass hay is very low in protein, and vegetable proteins are expensive, the dairy I visited was feeding a grain mixture containing 20 per cent fish meal. The carbohydrates were whole wheat and some imported corn. This dairy averaged 6,600 pounds per cow per year.

Farm houses of today are not like the turf huts that were used not too long ago. I was surprised at their size, fine appearance and obvious prosperity. 92 per cent of the farms have electricity. This latter is cheap because of the many waterfalls for power.

Another crop is beautiful flowers grown in greenhouses heated from the hot springs. I even saw bananas growing inside, and one greenhouse had hundreds of tomato plants climbing on cords suspended from above.

Farm equipment seemed to be nearly entirely of American origin, but the automobiles were not.

Summer weather is about like April in St. Louis, although it is colder in the northern part away from the Gulf Streams. It is strange to live in perpetual daylight as you do in June. I read a book in my hotel at midnight, and saw a beautiful sunset at 1:30 a.m. The Icelanders appreciate the

summer and seem to stay up all night to make up for winter. Although outwardly quiet, they seem to be a very contented, industrious people, and they do make merry in the big cities. Our bus load of bird watchers covered a large part of the country, and we met nothing but friendliness. Interior hotels are scarce, but school dormitories are turned into summer hotels as soon as the students leave on June 1. Rural high schools have dormitories, as it would be impossible for the students to make long trips to school in the winter.

Education is free but the student pays his own board. Icelanders are great swimmers, as swimming is an obligatory course in school. The President himself takes a swim every morning in a public pool in Reykjavik.

There is a great pride in their high standard of education and their interest in books. There are book stores everywhere, and they preserve many of the old sagas written hundreds of years ago. It was from there that Leif Ericsson made his trips to America in about the year 1000. What would Leif say if he learned that you can fly back to Iceland in about five hours by jet, and that there are daily flights to Europe and America?

## CALENDAR

In order that participants in this program may be aware of the exact dates and the locations of this entire series of lectures, we are giving herewith the dates of the remaining programs together with their locations.

Please note that for the first time three of the programs are presented at Clayton High School instead of the Third Baptist Church.

Tuesday, December 15, 1964

Friday, January 8, 1965

Friday, February 12, 1965\*

Friday, March 12, 1965

Friday, April 23, 1965\*

Friday, May 7, 1965

\*Clayton High School, Mark Twain Circle. Enter from Maryland Avenue at headquarters of Brown Shoe Co.



## ST. LOUIS AREA SUMMER AND FALL BIRDING

By J. EARL COMFORT

The Illinois Mississippi River levees below the Jefferson Barracks Bridge, as usual, furnished the best warm weather birding, enticing more observers to make more trips in that area than in any other local region until a severe drought dried up Moredock Lake and many other levee potential birding spots late in July. As a result of such rarities as whimbrel, Hudsonian godwit white ibis, Mississippi Kite, White pelican, cattle egret, barn owl and western kingbird were checked to the delight of many listers, not to mention such lesser highlight listings as snowy egret, yellow-crowned night heron, white-fronted goose, peregrine falcon, common gallinule, buff-breasted sandpiper, yellow-headed blackbird and hooded warbler.

Early shorebirds began to gather in fair numbers at Moredock Lake in mid-July, but the mudflats gave up the ghost by Aug. 1st with the complete drying of the popular lake. Because the lakes of Grand Marais State Park, East St. Louis, gave us excellent mud flats by the time Moredock became non existent, we naturally transferred our birding affection to East St. Louis where we listed such rare shorebirds as piping plover, black-bellied plover, turnstone, Baird's sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Wilson's phalarope and northern phalarope. A total of 21 species of shorebirds appeared at Grand Marais in August. This is excellent shorebird production. Kathryn Arhos and Mike Flieg were among our most active birders.

In the morning of Sept. 12th Steve Hanselmann and John Willette had good warbler listing with 21 species, which included a rare hybrid Brewster's.

After the vacation break during July and August St. Louis Audubon resumed its third Saturday and last Sunday of each month nature hikes at popular Shaw's Garden Arboretum. Earl and Connie Hath returned from an extended vacation in the West in time for Earl to continue his leader chores at the Arboretum.

Our society again sponsored class instructions for nature students at Shaw's Garden during the school vacation period. A bumper crop of youngsters availed themselves of this excellent opportunity to study nature and conservation under competent leaders, who unselfishly gave their time to further this worthy cause.

## RAISING AND TAMING A BLUE JAY

By MRS. LEONA SULLIVAN

As we looked out the window one sunny afternoon we saw a bird's nest lying in the yard. Upon investigating we found three newborn blue jays. Lying about twenty feet from the nest we found the mother jay dead. They were taken in by my sister-in-law, Mrs. Ziembiski, who was very upset and concerned with their welfare.

She found the larger and the smaller one were still living, but one was dead. We judged them to be not more than a day or two old. She fixed two tea cups with kleenex and place a bird in each. Not knowing too much about wild birds, she mixed her own feeding formula which consisted of hard boiled egg yoke, bread or cracker crumbs, turtle food and fish food



moistened with warm water.

She had to feed them every hour because they could not eat too much at one time. She warmed the food and fed them with a stave from a man's shirt collar and an eyedropper. At first they needed to be fed practically around the clock. Not having their eyes open they did not know dark from daylight. She would take them wherever she went so they could get their proper feedings.

As time went by it was interesting to watch their eyes open and their little bodies become feathered. The first thing they saw was her dog a "Chihuahua" and a human being. As they grew older she kept them on the floor in the hall. When they would see the dog go by they would chirp and want to be fed. They also knew her voice and would open their mouths to be fed. It was amazing to see the dog named Mitzi adopt them and the Blue Jays must have felt the dog was their mother. At nights she would cover them with a towel and they would sleep until she uncovered them in the morning.

By now they were able to hop around and would follow my sister-in-law and Mitzi wherever they would go. She then decided it was time for them to have a bath. They were bathed in a luke warm soap water, rinsed and wrapped in a towel. This not drying their feather completely she turned on the hair dryer and put them in front of it. You have seen birds when they sun themselves. This is just what the Jays did, spread their wings and thoroughly enjoyed the warm air coming from the hair dryer.

As they began hopping around more and more we noticed the smallest Jay's legs were not properly developed. Thinking she was not feeding them the proper food or it may have been hurt in its fall from the nest, she then took them to a veterinarian. The veterinarian examined and watched the birds. She told Mrs. Ziembiski that she was doing a very good job at being a blue jay mother. There was nothing that could be done about straightening the bird's legs other than feeding them a more balanced diet, which was dog food, milk and giving them vitamin drops.

The little Jay would like to cuddle in her hands which must have made him feel secure being the weaker of the two. Mrs. Ziembiski had to go to her son's school picnic and had a neighbor baby sit for her because they still had to be fed about every hour.

They were turned out in the yard to spread their wings. Mrs. Ziembiski had to leave on an errand. A sudden rainstorm came up. Both birds were drenched and cold. So the next morning we found the smallest jay was no longer with us. We assumed the smallest and weakest jay must have died from exposure. From then on the big Jay was brought in the house at nights and whenever she left the house for his own protection.

The larger Jay was named "Tippy." He is a full grown blue jay and has been given his freedom as a wild bird. As I go on with this story you will understand why we feel he is domesticated and responds to human voices. Tippy has become used to humans but let a strange dog appear and tippy will squawk and run for cover. Yet Tippy has adopted Mitzi, the Chihuahua as its mother.

Mrs. Ziembiski lives in a county suburb where there are a lot of trees and shrubs. Tippy enjoys the outdoors but to this day he is perfectly content to come in the house and would remain in all the time, but after all he is not house broken.

We sit and watch him perform his capers for hours at a time. He has turned out to be a regular comic. Every morning bright and early he is on the window ledge or at the back door chirping and raising cane until he is let in and given his breakfast. At other times when he is hungry he is in



his favorite spot letting you know he wants to eat. It is something to watch him hop up the steps and know where the water and food is kept for both he and the dog. They both eat out of the same dishes. If during the day she would want to show off Tippy she goes outside and calls it by name and Tippy will answer and come to her. If she wants Tippy back in the yard she can send Mitzi out to find him. Tippy will follow Mitzi up the front steps thru the house and out in the yard. It is amazing to see Tippy following Mitzi and chirping to her as a Jay would do to a mother Jay.

On sunny days you can sit in the yard and hear Tippy warble just like a wild canary and at times its warble will sound just like a little puppy yipeing. I don't know if Blue Jay's have been known to mimick or not but I have seen and heard Tippy do these very things.

About a month ago we had another scare. It was a morning after we had a bad rainstorm. We heard a Jay bird squawking every time we called Tippy. We went looking for him only to find him in a gulley beneath the apple tree almost drowned. We brought him in the house, wrapped him in a towel with just his head sticking out, put him on the sofa with pillows all around. We were afraid he would get pneumonia from being so wet. He stayed wrapped and on the sofa for about four hours. What a relief, he then got restless and we turned him loose. He seemed to be just fine again.

He has a big time playing in the houses. He takes poker chips out of the holder and hides them one by one at various places in the room. He seems to go for the red ones before the other colors. He is very friendly toward all humans. One can be holding him on your finger and if you have a package of cigarettes in your pocket he will work at them until he gets one in his beak, holds it awhile, drops it, and goes back for another. He also likes to pick up marbles, silver money and anything that is shiny and hide it someplace in the room. In one incident is where curiosity caused a sudden chirp from Tippy. In his search for something to play with he found a rubber band. Standing on the floor he had his two feet on an end of the rubber band while the other end was in his beak. You could see him pulling and the rubber band stretching. All of a sudden he took his feet off the one end and pow it hit him in the head. He shook his head and turned and really gave that rubber band a look. I don't think he will pick up another one to use for a toy.

Tippy is very close to being domesticated. He will eat ice cream, pop-sicles, cookies, and candy and almost anything we eat. He enjoys human food best, and shuns the lowly worm.

The thoughtfulness and concern of Mrs. Ziembiski toward a helpless wild Blue Jay has turned out to be something to see and be proud of. She deserves a lot of credit for it took a lot of effort and patience to accomplish this. The blue Jay "Tippy" is still making his home in the yard and house of Mrs. Gertrude Ziembiski, 9815 Omega, Hathaway Meadows, St. Louis, Mo.

We wonder if Tippy will remain with us or will a mate eventually coax him back to the outdoor life of the wild birds.

Written by

Mrs. Leona Sullivan  
954 Harlan Avenue  
St. Louis, Mo. 63147

# ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 26, 1964 — 8:00 A. M.

Meet at Boschertown School House, Hwy. 94, St. Charles County. To reach it drive across bridge at St. Charles, follow Hwy. 94 north to school house located on Hwy. 94 at Hwy. B on the left side of road.

The Webster Groves Nature Study Society will have their Christmas bird count at the Busch Wildlife Area at Weldon Springs. Meet at the School House at the entrance on Sunday, January 3, at 8 o'clock.

*Compliments of*

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Earl H. Hath ..... President  
Miss Alberta Bolinger ..... Executive Secretary

**St. Louis Audubon Society**  
**5079 Waterman Ave.**  
**St. Louis, Mo. 63108**

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